

Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom (SPECA) Challenge Grants Program

## FY 2017 Frequently Asked Questions

Please refer to the <u>FY17 SPECA REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS</u> for complete application instructions.

#### **FAQs**

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# What is the focus of the NIFA's Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom (SPECA) Challenge Grants Program?

- O SPECA funding supports the enhancement of K-14 instruction to meet the current and future training needs in the food, agricultural, natural resources and human (FANH) sciences
- O These grants also support projects designed to increase the number and diversity of students who will pursue and complete a 2- or 4-year degree in FANH science fields.
- Funding may also support synergistic linkages among secondary, two-year postsecondary, and higher education programs in the FANH sciences in order to advance excellence in education and encourage more young Americans to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the FANH sciences.

#### Who is eligible to apply?

- O Public secondary schools—applicant must be school, not district.
- O Junior and community colleges
- O Institutions of higher education.
- Nonprofit organizations

#### What is the funding rate of submitted applications?

O The funding rate for FY 2016 was 14.5%

## What are the types of projects funded?

- O Curriculum Development;
- O Instructional Delivery Systems;
- O Experiential (hands-on) Learning for Students;
- Faculty preparation and enhancement for teaching;
- O Facilitating Interaction with Other Academic Institutions;
- O Planning for Future Project Applications.

## How much money is available and for how long?

- O There are four types of projects and four funding levels. They are as follows:
  - Planning Activity Grants \$25,000 total, not per year for 12 to 24 months
  - Regular Grants (single projects) \$50,000 total, not per year for 24-36 months. Note: although the project director is not required to share funds in this option, projects should support more than just one class or instructor. A single project should have a broad student impact to be competitive.
  - Collaborative Grant Type 1 (CG1) (Applicant + One or more Partners) \$150,000, total, not per year for 24-36 months.
  - Collaborative Grant Type 2 (CG2) (Applicant + Two or more Partners)

\$300,000 total, not per year for 24-36 months.

CG2 applications must document how the project will address four key sets of impacts:

- Address National Challenge
- Expand recruitment into FANH science
- Improve retention of FANH science students
- Inform FANH science teaching community of best practices
- Can funds be used to support summer programs?
  - o Yes
- Can funds be used to support international projects?
  - o Yes
- Is there a limit to the number of applications an institution may submit?
  - O There is no limit to the number of applications an institution can submit,
  - O A single institution can receive up to two awards per year.
  - O A maximum of one CG2 award will be given to a single institution in one year.
- Do I have to be a U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents to submit an application as a project director?
  - Yes
- Do I have to be a U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents to be a co-PD?
  - o No
- Is there a matching requirement?
  - O SPECA applicants must provide a 100% match unless they are an exempt institution or they partner with an exempt institution.
  - O Matching funds can be in-kind contributions,
  - O Matching funds cannot come from a federal funding source.
  - O Institutions that are exempt from the match include
    - A research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture
    - 1862 land-grant institutions
    - 1890 land-grant institutions
    - 1994 land-grant institutions
    - Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities

- Insular area schools eligible to receive funds from the Distance Education/Resident Instruction Grant Programs
- Recipients of McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program Funds
- Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA)
- Other entities are as described in the RFA(Part III.B)

#### Are indirect costs allowed?

- O Yes. Indirect costs are allowed up to 30%
- O For more information see: http://nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs

#### Are there any unallowable costs or restrictions?

- O Grant funds may not be used for student tuition or scholarships.
- A Planning Activity Grant application may not be submitted in the same year for which a Collaborative Grant application for the same project is also submitted
- O Promotional items (e.g., T-shirts and other give-a-ways) and food functions (e.g., cookouts or other social meal gatherings) are considered 'entertainment' expenses, and are also not allowed
- Construction of greenhouses or other facilities, minor alterations, renovations or repairs are, however, allowed if applicant can demonstrate teaching relevance

## How do applicants begin the application process?

- STEP 1: Read the SPECA Request for Applications (RFA) on NIFA's website.
  (www.nifa.usda.gov and search for SPECA) You can also access the RFA page here: http://tinyurl.com/js6n29g
- O STEP 2: Ensure your school is registered with Grants.gov. All of NIFA's competitive grants receive their proposals through <u>Grants.gov</u>. You will need to register for Grants.gov and SAM. Registration may take up to a month so you will need to finish this process as soon as possible. This site can guide you through the Grants.gov registration process: <a href="http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.htm">http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.htm</a>
- O STEP 3: Follow the RFA instructions carefully. We are not able to accept applications that do not meet the guidelines included in the RFA.
- O STEP 4: Be sure to file the application in Grants.gov before the deadline of 5 p.m. EST on Friday, March 10, 2017. We do not accept late applications.

## If I receive an award, what can I expect?

- O A minimum of six months will be needed to process awards after the application deadline
- O You will also have to provide annual reporting—both financial and project reports annually throughout the life of the grant

## Are there special details to be aware of when drafting a proposal?

- O Applications will not go through in Grants.gov unless all pages are in PDF format
- O In 2017 applicants should use the program code SPECA, a change from previous years
- O Page limits are strictly enforced.
  - Ten pages for regular, CG1, and CG2 applications, plus five additional pages for tables and figures
  - Seven pages for planning grants, plus three additional pages for tables and figures

#### How will my application be reviewed?

 An explanation of NIFA's Peer Review Process is available online here: https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications

#### What if I still have questions?

- O View the FY17 SPECA Webinar: <a href="https://nifa.usda.gov/event/secondary-challenge-speca-webinar">https://nifa.usda.gov/event/secondary-challenge-speca-webinar</a>
- O Contact us at K-14@nifa.usda.gov